

## Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10  
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11  
/066 W

-----086846 231722Z /43

R 231605Z AUG 78  
FM AMEMBASSY ROME  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5177  
INFO AMCONSUL FLORENCE  
AMCONSUL GENOA  
AMCONSUL MILAN  
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW  
AMCONSUL NAPLES  
AMCONSUL PALERMO  
AMEMBASSY PRAGUE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 ROME 15502

E.O. 11652 GDS  
TAGS: PINT, IT  
SUBJECT: PCI SHOWS SIGNS OF STRAIN

SUMMARY. STARTING WITH THE JUNE-JULY PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS, FOLLOWED BY A CENTRAL COMMITTEE MEETING IN LATE JULY AND CAPPED BY THE PAINFUL TENTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE SOVIET INVASION OF PRAGUE, THE COMMUNISTS, MORE THAN THE OTHER PARTIES, SEEM TO HAVE BEEN PUSED ONTO THE DEFENSIVE BY EVENTS. FROM BERLINGUER'S SPEECH TO THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE (ROME 13828) AND HIS INTERVIEW AUGUST 2 WITH LA REPUBBLICA (ROME 14404), IT SEEMS THAT PCI PARTICIPATION IN THE PARLIAMENTARY MAJORITY AND ITS EFFORT TO BE ALL THINGS TO BE ALL MEN ARE STIRRING UNREST AMONG THE RANK AND FILE. END SUMMARY.

1. WHILE MOST ITALIAN POLITICAL LEADERS WERE ABLE TO ESCAPE FROM ROME IN LATE AUGUST, THE PCI LEADERSHIP SEEMED ALWAYS  
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CLOSE TO THE CAPITAL CITY. THE RESIGNATION OF LOENE AND THE SUBSEQUENT ELECTION OF PERTINI CONSUMED ENORMOUS AMOUNTS OF TIME FOR THE PCI AND OTHER PARTIES. THE PCI HAD MEANT LITTLE TIME FOR OTHER THINGS, TAKING A STAND-PAT VIS-VIS THE GOVERNMENT AND LETTING ANDREOTTI TAKE THE LEAD.

2. HOWEVER, IT SEEMS THAT THE RANK AND FILE IS

UNWILLING TO STAND STILL TOO MUCH LONGER. QUICK ACTION IS EXPECTED OF THE PCI LEADERSHIP ON SUCH DEVILISHLY DIFFICULT QUESTIONS AS UNEMPLOYMENT, PARTICULARLY AMONG THE YOUTH, INVESTMENT, INDUSTRIALIZATION, AGRICULTURE, DEVELOPMENT IN THE SOUTH, ETC. BASED N OUR READING OF THE COMMUNIST PRESS AND MEETINGS WITH VARIOUS PCI LEADERS, THESE ARE THE ISSUES THAT THE PCI IS EXPECTED TO BEAR DOWN ON THIS FALL.

3. ANOTHER PRICKLY QUESTION IS THE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE GOVERNMENT AND WITH THE DC. IN RESPONSE TO WHAT APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN HEAVY INNER-PARTY CRITICISM, BERLINGUER WAS CONTRAINED TO EXPLAIN AT THE JULY 24-26 CENTRAL COMMITTEE IN AN EMERGENCY SITUATION. THIS WAS DUE, HE SAID, TO (A) HEAVY PRESSURE FROM WESTERN GOVERNMENTS, PRIMARILY THE US AND ITS JANUARY 12 STATEMEN, (B) THE SERIOUS RESISTANCE FROM CERTAIN SECTORS OF THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTY, AND (C) THE OPPOSITION OF THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS AND THE LACK OF POLITICIAL COURAGE BY THE SOCIALISTS. AT THE SAME TIME, BERLINGUER HEARLDED COMMUNIST PARTICIPATION IN THE PARLIAMENTARY MAJORTY AS THE END OF 30 YEARS OF DISCRIMINATION TOWARDS THE PCI.

4. WHILE BERLINGUER'S DFENSE IS OBVIOUSLY SELF-SERVING AND PLACES THE BLAME FOR PCI SHORTCOMINGS AT OTHER DOORSTEPS, IT IS NOWT WITHOUT INTEREST THAT BERLINGUER IDENTIFIES HIS MAJOR OBSTACLES AS US VIEWS, CERTAIN FACTIONS WITHIN  
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THE DC, AND THE SOCIALISTS. AS FOR THE LATTER, CPI-PSI RELATIONS APPEAR TO BE STILL DOWNHILL, REMINDING US OF BARCA'S JUDGEMENT IN JUNE THAT THEY ARE THE WORST SINCE 1945 (ROME 11641).

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 ROME 15502

5. BERLINGUER ALSO SOUGHT TO SHORE UP HIS OTHER FLANK IN AN UNUSUAL PRESS INTERVIEW GRANTED TO LA REPUBBLICA AUGUST 2, WHICH WAS SIMULTANEOUSLY PUBLISHED IN L'UNITA' TO GIVE IT A DOCTRINAL BLESSING. IN RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS ON FUNDAMENTAL TENETS OF COMMUNIST IDEOLOGY, BERLINGUER SUGGESTED THAT THE PCI WAS NOT ALL THAT LENINIST, AND THAT A RIGID PARTY STATUTE ON DEMOCRATIC CENTRALISM WOULD BE CHANGED AT THE NEXT PARTY CONGRESS. AS FOR THE HISTORIC COMPROMISE, THAT WOULD BE A LONG PROCESS INVOLVING DIFFERENT FORCES AT DIFFERENT TIMES. RE RELATIONS WITH THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT, BERLINGUER REITERATED THAT EVENTUAL PCI PARTICIPATION IN GOVERNMENT IS STILL AN OPEN QUESTION. HOWEVER, IF THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT IS NOT UP TO THE TASK, THE PCI WILL NOT REMAIN IN THE MAJORITY, HE SAID. HIS ASSERTION THAT THE PCI DOES NOT SUPPORT ANDREOTTI TO SEEK LEGITIMACY OR TO LEAVE THINGS AS THEY ARE HAS BEEN ECHOED CONTINUOUSLY BY HIS PRINCIPAL COLLABORATORS IN ORDER TO PUT THE DC ON CONFIDENTIAL

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GUARD FOR THIS FALL..

6. FINALLY, THE PCI WAS TOSSED THE HOT POTATO OF THE TEN-YEAR ANNIVERSARY OF THE SOVIET INVASION OF PRAGUE. NON OTHER THAN GIANCARLO PAJETTA WAS CALLED UPON TO EXPLAIN ON NATIONWIDE TELEVISION THE PCI POSITION ON THE QUESTION. IN SHORT, THE PCI CONDEMNED THAT ACTION THEN, CONDEMNS IT NOW, AND THE INVASION REMAINS QUOTE AN OPEN WOUND UNQUOTE. AS FOR CZECHOSLOVAKIA, THE SITUATION THERE DOES NOT CORRESPOND WITH THE PCI CONCEPT OF A SOCIALIST STATE, HE SAID, PAJETTA STOPPED FAR SHORT, HOWEVER, OF CALLING FOR THE WITHDRAWAL OF SOVIET TROOPS FROM CZECHOSLOVAKIA.

7. THE ITALIAN PRESS GAVE MAJOR COVERAGE TO THE ANNIVERSARY WITH NUMEROUS ARTICLES, PICTURES, AND THE LIKE. THERE WAS A DEMONSTRATION IN FRONT OF THE

CZECHLOVAK EMBASSY BY SMALL GROUPS BUT TO OUR KNOWLEDGE THERE HAVE BEEN NO OTHER MANIFESTATIONS. L'UNITA' HAS PICKED UP THE "OPEN WOUND" DESCRIPTION OF PAJETTA AND HAS GENERALLY FOLLOWED THAT LINE, REJECTING THE SOVIET-REVOLUTION. WHILE THE CZECHOSLOVAK PROBLEM SEEMS TO BE A MANAGEABLE ONE FOR THE PCI, IT IS AN ADDITIONAL DIVISIVE FACTOR AMONG THE COMMUNISTS AND THEIR SUPPORTERS.

8. COMMENT: THUS THE PCI ENTERS THE FALL PARLIAMENTARY SESSION PUSHED BY ITS RANK AND FILE TO TAKE A TOUGHER LINE VIS-VIS THE GOVERNMENT AND TO MAKE A MORE AGGRESSIVE ATTACK ON ITALY'S MAJOR ECONOMIC PROBLEMS. THE TOUGHEST PERIOD MAY WELL BE LATE OCTOBER-EARLY NOVEMBER WHEN MAJOR CONTRACTS COME UP FOR NEGOTIATION. AS FOR THE PCI LEADERSHIP, IT SEEMS TO WANT TO APPLY  
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THE BREAKS SINCE THIS PRESSURE COULD PUSH THE PCI FASTER AND FARTHER THAN IT WISHES TO GO, SCARE OF POTENTIAL ALLIES, AND LEAD TO EARLY ELECTIONS NEXT SPRING WHICH THE PCI, AMONG ALL THE PARTIES, WANTS THE LEAST. YET TO APPLY THE BREAKS TOO FIRMLY IS TO RISK STIRRING UP EVEN MORE DISSENT WITHIN THE PARTY, WHICH IS ALREADY FACED WITH A DECLINING RATE OF NEW RECRUITS, AN INCREASED NUMBER OF PARTY DROPOUTS, AND A SIGNIFICANT DROP IN THE PCI YOUTH FEDERATION NUMBERS. STILL AS THE DC AND OTHERS HOLD FIRM, THE PCI SEEMS TO HAVE NO CHOICE TO CONTINUE TO TELL ITS SUPPORTS THAT IT HAS NOT BASICALLY CHANGED AND THAT IT IS A TRADITIONAL COMMUNIST PARTY, WHILE ATTEMPTING TO REASSURE ITS OPPONENTS OF THE CONTRARY.  
END COMMENT.HOLMES

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## Message Attributes

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